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THE RUSSIAN- JAPANESE WAR

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A REVIEW of the present situation in the Far East, a summary of the causes that have led up to it, and a glance at the future, are contained in the following interview given by George F. Seward, president of the FIDELITY AND CASUALTY COMPANY, to the Newark *Evening News*. Mr. Seward, whose residence in East Orange has identified him in many ways with New Jersey, speaks with authority on Oriental matters, and his views, made public in this paper at the time of the Boxer outbreak, attracted wide attention. Mr. Seward served as United States Consul and Consul-General

at Shanghai for many years, and from 1876 to 1880 was United States Minister to China. In 1869 he was appointed Minister to Corea, but, at his suggestion, the sending of a mission to that country was deferred. While in China he was especially active in checking piracy and suppressing riots.

At the beginning of the conversation Mr. Seward, in response to a question, spoke of the naval demonstration made by Russia in New York harbor during the Civil War. He said:

“I take it that the question is suggested by assertions frequently seen in our newspapers that Americans should sympathize with Russia, in the contest she is waging with Japan, because of her friendliness to us. My answer will go over considerable ground.

What the Russian Fleet's Visit Meant.

“The naval demonstration mentioned was an incident of more than passing concern to our people. We were waging a civil war that seemed desperate to some of our own people. It was thought hopeless by most public men in England and France. - Even Mr. Gladstone, than whom no Englishman was more friendly to us, said in a public address that our people ‘should recognize the fact that Jefferson Davis had created a nation.’ There was underlying and unconcealed hostility toward us on both sides of the English Channel. Just at a happy moment Russia sent her fleet to our shores. It was intended that the occasion

should be so directed as to indicate a warm and friendly feeling for us. Our people accepted the demonstration with gratitude.

“There is no reason why the incident should not be remembered with satisfaction. It was a graceful thing on the part of Russia. If it was what might be called a diplomatic move, it was not less graceful. If it gave pause to English or French sentiment by a suggestion that Russian sentiment and Russian purposes did not run with English and French sentiment or their possible purposes, it was not less valuable to us. Yet one knows that there are always interests between the great European powers that receive their first attention. If Russia was calling a halt to England and France, she no doubt had purposes to serve. If her diplomacy has always been, so far as we are concerned, complaisant and largely appreciative, we may say that her diplomacy is always astute and well directed. It is a diplomacy such as may exist in a state not subject to parliamentary control. It seeks to promote policies that are permanent. It does so under a control that is permanent and through agents who are permanent and understand their business.”

Mr. Seward continued:

“When we ask whether the naval demonstration and the perennial delights that have been showered upon us by Russian diplomacy should lead us to take sides with her, sympathetically, in the East, the

answer is a very simple one. We should have a right regard to our own interests in the East, and we should never forget to sympathize with the nation that has a just conception of its own rights and duties as against any nation that may be serving its own interest regardless of the rights of the other.

The Question Not Obscure.

“The real Eastern question (to be more definite, let us call it the Oriental question) is not an obscure one. Russia owns all the territory in the northern part of Asia from the Ural Mountains to the Pacific. She has not had until lately an outlet to the Pacific by an ice-free port. Down between Japan and the littoral of eastern Siberia there pours an arctic current making the climate rigorous for the latitude. For this reason after the China-Japan War of 1898, Russia, in return for services to China in preventing Japan from making permanent lodgment on the northern shore of the Gulf of Pechili, secured from China by a secret treaty the right to build a railway from her trans-Siberian line south through Manchuria, the undisputed territory of China, to Port Arthur on the promontory of Liau-tung, which promontory extends from the mainland of Manchuria south into the Gulf of Pechili, and the right to lease an ice-free harbor on the promontory for permanent occupation. In pursuance of this concession, Russia has built the Manchurian Railway to Dalny and Port Arthur at the

southern end of the promontory of Liau-tung and has created commercial and military stations at Dalny and Port Arthur.

“It was not wise on the part of China to grant to Russia these concessions. She herself should have built the railway and created the commercial port as its terminal on the gulf. She herself should have fortified the terminal port, giving reasonable transportation privileges to all comers, including Russians. But she could not avoid making the grant. It was in the nature of an enforced *quid pro quo*. It is now *un fait accompli*. The whole matter was worked out by diplomatic means. Russia got privileges that she needed, and as respects which the world at large may properly feel sympathetic with her. She needed such access to the Pacific. It was on the line of natural development.

“There is a general impression that Russian diplomacy is not always scrupulous. It is certain in this case that the occupation of Port Arthur, ostensibly for commercial purposes, has been followed by large expenditures intended to make it a strongly fortified naval station. It is certain also that her military occupation of parts of Manchuria, made at the time of the Boxer outbreak, has been continued and extended. It is certain that the protests in China against this action have gone unheeded. It is certain that those of Japan have gone unheeded. It is certain that Russia has not only disregarded these protests,

but has advanced in a positive way the proposition that Manchuria and even northern Korea must be considered within her 'sphere of influence.'

“Spheres of Influence.”

“The term ‘sphere of influence’ is a euphemism that everybody understands. It means that the nation asserting it intends, whenever it so desires, to take full control. It means that no other nation must interfere with its purpose, and it means that the purpose of full control may be worked up to by tentative steps.

“If we grant to Russia at once a reasonable degree of sympathy in her desire to get a commercial outlet on the Pacific, ought we to extend sympathy to her in her effort to seize and control territory belonging to China? This is a question of morality. If it is moral for a man to take property belonging to some one else by force and because it may be useful to him, it is moral for a nation to do the same thing. As a matter of common sense, and in view of the best conceptions of that very indeterminate thing, international law, it is not allowable for a nation to do an act the like of which would not be allowed to an individual.

“But for China or Japan there may be a broader ground of objection to the seizure of Manchuria. Possession of that territory may be held by them to create danger to their respective States. Our own

nation practically demanded that France, under Napoleon III., should abandon effort to control Mexico. We should have fought for our view if France had not complied with our demand. With nations, as with individuals, self-preservation is the first law of nature.

“That Japan feels strongly on this point was shown when she went to war with China. Her object was to throw herself across the path of Russia on the way to the Gulf of Pechili. The southern littoral of Manchuria was the scene of all her operations, and when she had conquered the territory her right to it was confirmed by treaty. Russia, uniting with France and Germany, forced her to give up the conquered territory and to rest satisfied with other indemnity. This action of Russia must have seemed to Japan proof enough that she had not been wrong in her conception of Russian purposes. And now the fact that she makes war on Russia is evidence of the most complete sort that the Japanese consider the Russian occupation of Manchuria a menace to their country that cannot be disregarded.

“In China, beyond a doubt, the same fears exist. It is Chinese territory, and territory that is held more dear because the ancestral seats of the Chinese dynasty are there. Any foreign occupation of Manchuria would be obnoxious to a degree. A permanent occupation would be regarded as the first step threatening the integrity of the body of the empire.

European Rule in Asia.

“Americans should stop to think of this. One-half of all Asia has passed under foreign rule. It is Russian in the north, French in the southeast, and English in the southwest. There is a constant forward movement of the European populations against the Asiatic. This movement is one not altogether indicative of national purposes. It results from the control already acquired. It is due to the same impulse that has pushed our own boundaries forward at the expense of Indian tribes or of other control, and that has pushed the English forward in South Africa. This movement occasions alarm, of course. What more natural than for the Chinese or Japanese to believe that what has happened in the districts to the north, to the southeast, and to the southwest, may happen in their territories.

“The Boxer movement had its origin in this fear. Russia had occupied Port Arthur. Germany had seized Kiau-Chau. England, as an offset against these advances, had demanded and received Wei-Hai-Wei. All these were points upon the Gulf of Pechili, excepting Kiau-Chau, and it was just off the gulf on the China Sea. The Boxers, with the sympathy of a faction in Peking, undertook their wild work in resentment against these aggressions. It succeeded in part, for it brought the foreign States named, and others seeking territorial aggrandizement at the

expense of China, to see that China would not be a passive victim of her own dismemberment.

“Japan, then, is fighting in self-defense. In doing so she is fighting, not only for her own permanent security, she is fighting for the permanent security of China as well. And in doing so it may be said that she is fighting the cause of Asia at large, the cause of the people of the ‘habitat’ against European domination. Am I wrong in saying to persons who believe in the ancient landmark idea, that Japan, not Russia, is entitled to their sympathy under such circumstances?

The Yellow Peril.

“We hear much about the yellow peril. In view of what has been said, the yellow peril scare will appear very idle. It is, indeed, so ridiculous, in view of the advance of Europe (must we add America?) in Asia, that we may readily believe that it is the talk of persons who are not well informed, or talk that is put out for a purpose. It comes from St. Petersburg and from Berlin. Why it comes from St. Petersburg is easily conceived. Why from Berlin will be seen later.

“As a long-time resident in the East, I assert that the yellow peril is a thing to cause no anxiety. No great States in the world’s history have been so consistently peaceful as China and Japan. Possessing overwhelming power, they have refrained from conquests, even over surrounding petty States. There is Korea and the Lew Chew Islands to the east, and

all the Cochin-Chinese States, Siam, Burmah, Malacca, Borneo, the Philippines and Java to the south. Who has ever heard of hostile movements against them on the part of either? Japan was content with her own territory until white men came. Since then she has developed an ardent military spirit, but she has not since made any war where it could be said that territorial aggrandizement was the purpose. The yellow peril is a matter of imagination, then, where it is not a matter of allegation for a purpose. It is not Europe that has cause to fear Asia; it is Asia that has cause to fear Europe.

“The United States has had a distinct policy in the East until lately. It may be that it still has. Our policy was to maintain an attitude of respect and sympathy for China and Japan, and to seek to draw other nations into the same attitude; to the end that the territorial integrity of both nations might be sustained, to the end that just things only might be done to those states, to the end that those states might the better be led to do just things in all their relations with foreign nations, and to the end that the people of all nations might have in China and Japan a fair field for their commerce and enterprise. This was our traditional policy. It was broadly conceived, and under it, so long as it was well observed by foreign states, China and Japan progressed on peaceful lines, and intercourse that was beneficial on both sides continually broadened. As a

policy it was altogether above and beyond the much-vaunted 'open door' policy. Under the latter we did no more than claim that our trade should not be interfered with in the 'spheres of influence.' Under the former we actively combated the first beginnings of the 'spheres of influence' idea. The open door catchword was invented in England. It was long ago dropped there. It was taken up at Washington. It is high time that it should be dropped here as meaningless, and for our government to rest once more upon the proposition that when we defend in all right ways the territorial integrity of China and Japan, we do the only thing that can secure an open door.

Purposes of European Powers.

"If we take it for granted that America, despite all that has happened, should stand for the integrity of China and Japan, it may be asked how far different ideas may control the European powers.

"We know the purposes of Russia. She wants certain territory and means to have it. Her magnificent Siberian domain would be rounded out if she gained Manchuria and Corea. As she has permitted herself to drift into war with Japan rather than to secure permanent peace by the simple means of agreeing in advance not to invade Chinese sovereignty in Manchuria or Korean sovereignty, it must be supposed that she holds to the purpose of securing control of Manchuria and possibly of Corea at any hazard.

“To one who knows, or believes he knows, the East, there is no difficulty in reaching a conclusion as to the purposes of Great Britain. She has already vast control in Asia. Under her sway are at least 200,000,000 of people. She knows that unrest exists there, and is more concerned to hold what she has than to attempt to secure more territory. She desires the integrity of China and Japan because she does not wish to limit the field of the commercial activities of her people. She does not wish the balance of power in Eastern Asia disturbed. Russia, her old adversary on the Baltic and the Mediterranean and along her Indian frontier, would be more difficult to deal with if planted firmly with military and naval bases in the territory that juts down wedge-like between China and Japan. England is the natural ally of Japan and China.

“France has close sympathy with Russia in these days. Russia has played an astute diplomatic game. The French, without any underlying interest to justify sympathy, have yielded to Russia a great deal of it of late. Jealousy of Germany and jealousy of England has been an element in the Russo-French ‘rapprochement.’ But after all, the alliance, if it may be called such, is sentimental rather than serious. France has control of territory in Cochin-China that is undeveloped. She may look to the acquisition of territory from China along the Cochin-Chinese border, but she does not need it for military or naval purposes

and the population there is not an easy one to control. She is not a colonizing power in the ordinary sense. As against the policy of sustaining the integrity of China and of Japan, France may be said to be a negligible quantity.

Germany's Position.

“The case may be different with Germany. The latter is an ambitious nation, as respects foreign markets and territory. Her people are scattering themselves all over the face of the earth wherever trade is to be done and taking a share in all opportunities. Her government has not been idle. It has shown extreme interest in Asia Minor; it has acquired territory in Central Africa; it has seized a point of immense vantage on the coast of China.

“The object of this seizure is not well understood. The bare facts are as follows: After the secret treaty between China and Russia, referred to above, was made, but before knowledge of it had become general, Germany seized Kiau-Chau. Two German missionaries had been killed, and, without waiting for reparation, she made her descent upon that place. It so happens that back of Kiau-Chau, in the province of Shansi, is the finest coal and iron field in the world. That field is Germany's objective point. With German scientific skill, commercial quality and capital, and Chinese cheap labor, what will happen in the iron markets of the world when Germany enters upon this

promised land may be left to the imagination of the reader. Why talk is put out from Berlin about the 'Yellow Peril' may be left to the judgment of the reader. What will that peril really be when Germany is in possession and has developed the mines of Shansi?

"The question whether Russia and Germany are silent allies, the object of each being territorial aggression at the expense of China, I cannot answer. They were allied when they forced Japan to release the Manchurian littoral on the Gulf of Pechili after the China-Japan War. They may be still, with complete understanding as to their respective spheres of influence. It is reasonable to suppose that they are, although it is possible that Russia may feel that Germany has thrown herself across her march to the south in China proper, and it is possible that Germany may feel that Russian progress may contain a threat against German control of the coal and iron of Shansi. The situation is interesting, and clearly enough indicates that not the integrity of China, but the partition of China, more or less, is involved in the plans of Germany as well as in those of Russia.

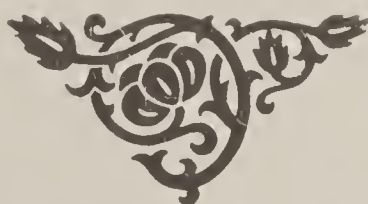
"For China, for Japan, for England, and for the United States, German purposes in Shansi are a matter of consequence. If Russia succeeds in Manchuria, China proper might not be affected greatly. Manchuria is outlying territory, and the loss of it might not affect China more than the loss of the State

of Maine would affect the body of our nation. But Shansi lies between Peking, the seat of government, and the great body of population of the empire. With Germany in control, the capital would have to be abandoned and a new seat found for the government. With Russia in Manchuria and Germany in Shansi, the partition of the empire would have been begun, and the old empire, helpless, would fall an easy victim of further aggressions, in which France, Italy, and possibly England and the United States, might be involved. The map of Eastern Asia would be changed and once more the Asiatic would go down before the Caucasian. And these same Caucasians, stirred by the delirium of conquest and separated by boundaries of indeterminate character, might be expected to fall into disagreements and wars, the like of which the world has never seen, because involving nations and populations on two sides of the globe. It is possible to conceive that Russia and Germany might emerge from these collisions with greater opportunities. Possibly England and France might. But not so with the United States. We could never bring the national conscience to support Asiatic enterprises to the bitter end.

Against Foreign Aggressions.

“Having been for twenty years while in China an ardent supporter of the policy of just dealing with China; having never since my return from China felt

any occasion to revise my judgment in this respect: having been reared to believe that the off-colored stocks have rights that white men should respect: having appreciation of both the Chinese and Japanese as men altogether like ourselves in mental and moral endowments; it is natural for me to stand true to the conviction that foreign aggressions in that region ought to be reprobated, and, so far as possible, prevented. And having seen the policy of just dealing initiated by Burlingame successful for a long time, I am persuaded that it is within the range of possibility to-day for our country to advocate that policy by moral force, with good hope that it will help greatly to relieve the tension of the situation. It may be that I am wrong in the hope. It may be that my countrymen will lean to the idea that the domination of Asia by Europe will make for the best interests of the world. I am not of that opinion; and, having had opportunities to judge possessed by few, it may be that my opinion, even if held alone, is the right one."



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